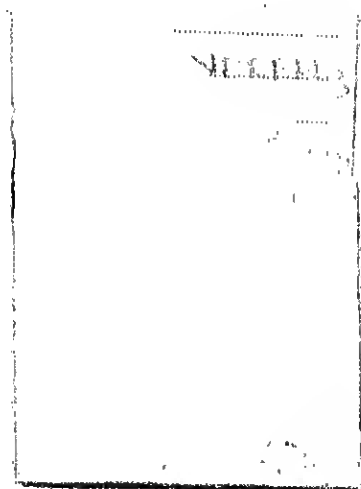


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POEMS FROM TAGORE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

C. F. ANDREWS



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INTRODUCTION

(I)

This book is intended primarily for use in schools and colleges in India. At the same time, it is hoped that the selection may be found useful in other countries also as a text book and for private reading. The Song Preludes from the 'Cycle of Spring' have been given in full, as they form a sequence.

(II)

Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta on May 6, 1861. His family had been illustrious for many generations. Dwarkanath Tagore, his grandfather, was one of the most distinguished figures in the social and political life of Bengal during the earlier part of the Nineteenth Century. He was the intimate friend and disciple of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. When the final verdict upon this period of Indian history comes to be written, Raja Ram Mohan Roy's name will stand out

high above the rest. He towered in intellect and spiritual insight and was fearless in his search for truth and freedom. It was significant that Dwarkanath Tagore was one of the very few contemporary Indians, who could understand and appreciate Raja Ram Mohan Roy's greatness.

The father of the poet was Debendranath Tagore. By universal consent he was called Maharshi, on account of the saintliness of his character. Rabinudranath was his youngest son.

Debendranath Tagore, in his middle age, was a great traveller. The little child was his youngest son in a large family of sons and daughters; his mother died when he was very young.

The instruction that Rabinudranath obtained as a child was chiefly through private tutors. School life in Calcutta became a burden and a misery to him. For his aesthetic and imaginative education, the most important stimulus was found through the daily intercourse within the brilliant circle of the Tagore family. His older brothers, and many of his relations, were noted throughout Bengal for their love of literature and drama and their cultivation of music and painting.

When Rabinudranath Tagore was seventeen years old his father sent him to England; but he only remained

there for a short time. It was after his return that the sudden illumination came to him in Calcutta, which was the true beginning of his active life as a poet. He has described the occurrence in a book called 'Reminiscences.' While he was standing on a balcony watching the first rays of the sun, as they touched the tops of some palm trees at the end of the lane opposite his room, it appeared to him as though a veil had been drawn aside from the face of nature and he could see into the very heart of things. There came to him, at the same moment, a sudden access of joy. He could feel, under its impulse, a unity pervading all creation and a sympathy in his own inner being with every creature. The consciousness of this joy filled his mind for many days. He instinctively realised beauty in the commonest things of life.

Then one of his elder brothers offered to take him up to Darjeeling. He eagerly accepted the offer, thinking that he would experience this new-found joy in still greater measure when he saw the Himalayan snows. But instead of this, the joy faded away. Thus he learnt the lesson, that it is not the rare and unusual incidents in life, through which the deepest truths are to be sought and found, but rather the ordinary course of common events.

During the years of early manhood that followed, Rabindranath Tagore wrote many of his lyrical poems. They are filled with subjective emotion and are of singular imaginative beauty. Hitherto, only a few of these have been translated into English.

(III)

At the age of twenty two the poet married. He had two sons and three daughters. Maharshi, his father, wished him to manage the ancestral estates at Shilaida, in East Bengal, and he readily obeyed. Shilaida is a village, situated on the banks of one of the great waters of the delta of the river Ganges, which is called the Padma. Here, by the side of the Ganges, he lived with his young family in the midst of the cultivators of East Bengal. The poor people came to love him as their friend. He would put aside, at a moment's notice, his own literary work in order to attend to their smallest needs. He entered with enthusiasm and energy into the difficult problems of village life in India and gained an intimate knowledge of the people. Meanwhile his literary work became firmer in its outline and more objective in its character. It was during this period that he wrote the greater number of his 'Short Stories.' He became

rapidly known among his own fellow-countrymen as a literary genius of the first order.

At the end of these peaceful years in the country, the poet felt the need to come out into the world of political activity, in order to help his own people in their struggle for independence. These were the stirring days at the beginning of the present century when the inhabitants of Bengal awoke, as out of a long sleep, to resist by every means in their power the partition of their own province. To Rabindranath Tagore, this act of partition meant a direct blow dealt against literature itself. It involved the separation of those who belonged to the same Bengali race and spoke the same Bengali mother tongue. Just when a literary renaissance had begun to flourish in Bengal, the blow had fallen. Therefore the poet desired at first to take an active part in the struggle along with his own people. He composed national songs and set them to tunes which were sung by the masses.

How he finally abandoned this movement, on its political side, because he found that it was leading directly to violence and tyranny, has been told in his novel, entitled 'The Home and the World.' He now concentrated all his energies upon founding a school for the education of the young. His father had set up at

Belpur his last house of rest and retreat after his many wanderings were over. He called it Shantiniketan, the Abode of Peace. There he spent a great part of his time in prayer and meditation. Rabindranath Tagore asked permission from his father to build his school in this Ashram, or religious retreat. He had confidence that the young children would feel the atmosphere of religion in such a place and would grow up in spiritual freedom. Maharshi gladly gave his permission.

At first, Rabindranath Tagore could find no support for his own plans about his school from anyone except his father. Therefore the burden of expense and maintenance had to be borne all alone. He sold up little by little everything he had in order to obtain funds to carry on his work. Even the copy-rights of his Bengali works had to be parted with for this object. But he found a continual inspiration in the happiness and freedom of spirit of the young children who grew up around him. They were few in number, and the poet would lavish upon them all his gifts of intellect and imagination, teaching them their daily lessons, telling them fairy stories of his own creation, composing for them dramas and songs, singing to them the music he had made for their special delight.

While these early struggles at Shantiniketan Ashram

were still unrelieved, there came in addition upon Rabindranath Tagore, in his own family circle, one blow after another of bereavement. His wife died, and also two of his own children, namely, one of his daughters and his youngest son. It was out of the depth of this personal suffering that many of the poems in 'Gitanjali' were written. Yet it was at this very time of suffering that a new illumination dawned upon him, which seemed to fulfil the vision of his youth. He saw even death itself to be a perfection, a completeness.

(IV)

A break came in his own life when Rabindranath Tagore visited England for the second time, in the summer of the year 1912. An illness of a serious nature had sapped his strength, and he was obliged by the doctors' orders to go abroad. He left India, soon after his fifty-first birthday, and sailed for Europe. During the later period of his illness in India, and on his voyage to England, he had occupied himself with some first attempts to translate his own Bengali poems into a rhythmical English prose. He had little idea of the beauty of these translations. With characteristic self-diffidence and humility, he was almost afraid to show them to the literary friends he made in London. But

fortunately Mr. W. B. Yeats obtained a copy of them, and he was greatly impressed by their beauty and originality. He urged their immediate publication.

The success of 'Gitanjali' was phenomenal. It came as a new discovery in English literature and it carried its own message. Authors and literary critics from all sides praised the poet's work as exceptional in its noble simplicity. Very rapidly indeed, its fame spread to the continent of Europe, and translations were asked for in many European languages. Thus the recognition of the Indian poet in the West was spontaneous and universal.

During the following year, after a winter spent in North America, two new volumes of poetry were added, 'The Gardener' and 'The Crescent Moon.' The former contains chiefly love poems. The latter volume is entirely devoted to poems concerning childhood.

At this time also, some selections from Kabir, the Indian mediæval mystic, were translated by the poet; and the 'Autobiography of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore,' which had been published in India by Satyendranath Tagore, the poet's older brother, was republished by Macmillan in England. These two books helped the English readers to understand the religious life in India.

A prose work written by Rabindranath Tagore in America, named 'Sadhana,' which explained with

INTRODUCTION

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poetic feeling and lucidity of expression the spiritual teaching of the Upanishads, helped still further to make clear to the people of the West the attitude of the Eastern mind towards the problems of philosophy and religion. Like 'Gitanjali,' it has been very widely studied. It has also been translated into many different languages, both in Europe and in Asia. It is the best prose book for a student to read, who is making a beginning with the poet's works and trying to understand his religious and philosophic position.

During this time of literary activity in the West the health of the poet had not improved. There were even indications that it would grow worse. Therefore, in April, 1913, he underwent a critical surgical operation, which according to the best medical advice had become absolutely necessary. Owing to the great skill of the London specialist, who performed the operation, it was quite successful. A change set in, and recovery to normal health became rapid. He returned to India in the autumn of 1913 with his health in a great measure restored.

(V)

Rabindranath Tagore was now fifty-two years old. Soon after his return to India the world beyond of the

Nobel Prize for Literature was given to him. This decision of the Swedish literary judges met with general satisfaction. It was hailed with great enthusiasm in India itself and was regarded as a mark of genuine recognition of the East by the West.

The monetary award which accompanied this recognition, along with the receipts from his English books, was devoted by the Poet to his school at Shantiniketan. He threw himself once more with enthusiasm into the work of the school itself and lived entirely among his boys and school teachers.

Even before the Great War began, the poet had gone through a prolonged mental depression of a very painful character accompanied by a premonition of impending disaster. Some of his own Bengali poems, written before the War, speak of disaster as imminent. The War itself, when it came at last, caused intense inner suffering to him, and his physical weakness again returned owing to this continual mental and spiritual strain.

At this time, I was living with the poet at Shantiniketan and witnessed the suffering which he endured. His health remained weak during the whole of the year 1915. Some translations of his Bengali poems, relating to the world conflict, were published in England. They have been inserted in his later volumes of poetry.

Early in the year 1916, Rabindranath Tagore became more and more eager to go out abroad into the world again. On this occasion he turned his face towards the Far East and visited Japan. He met with a remarkable reception during the earlier part of his stay in that country. But when he spoke out fearlessly concerning the dangers of the cult of nationalism, the official mind in Japan became uneasy ; and this change of official attitude had a certain effect upon public opinion. Yet there can be no doubt that his visit to Japan left behind it a very deep impression, especially on the younger generation.

From the Far East, the poet went on across the Pacific Ocean to the United States of America. During his stay in that country, in addition to a strenuous lecturing tour, he took the opportunity of preparing for final publication some new volumes, which were ready in manuscript. 'Lover's Gift' and 'Stray Birds' were the names of two new books of poetry. Rabindranath Tagore had taken interest in the forms of Japanese poetry while living in Japan. He had been struck with the predominant aim at concise expression. In 'Stray Birds,' he gave his own poetical thoughts, as it were, in miniature. After his return from America a further volume was published, called 'Fruitgathering.' This

is a sequel to 'Gitanjali,' in the same way that 'Lover's Gift' is a sequel to 'The Gardener.'

Selections have been made from all these different volumes of poetry for this present book.

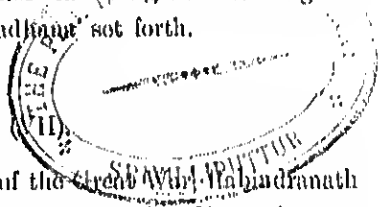
(VI)

To the prose literature of this period Rabindranath Tagore's most notable, and at the same time most sharply criticised contribution, was a small volume of essays, entitled 'Nationalism,' containing his lectures delivered in Japan and other papers. He condemned, in scathing terms and with prophetic fire, the aggressive national spirit, which was then so rampant in the world and had been a main exciting cause of the war hatred itself. This book called forth many adverse comments, not only in Japan, but in the West also. The War was not yet finished and everywhere the appeal was still being made to those very passions of enmity and aggression, which nationalism had the power to evoke.

After the War had ended and the difficulties of the peaceful solution of the world problems had been experienced, this prose work of the poet, which had been so domned before, came back into consideration on

the continent of Europe. It has been eagerly studied and its principles have gained wider and wider acceptance among those who have been disillusioned by the Great War.

A new volume of philosophical essays, entitled 'Personality,' was published during the American tour of the poet, in the winter of 1916-1917. It has been appreciated as an original contribution to philosophy, and has also carried further the religious teaching of the Upanishads which 'Sadhana' set forth.



Since the conclusion of the Great War, Rabindranath Tagore has been more and more convinced in his own mind, that only in the meeting of East and West, on the basis of mutual goodwill and international understanding, can the future welfare of humanity be assured. His mind has turned to this as the one central problem of the present age. In his lectures he has declared, that it is his intention to devote the remainder of his life to this object; for it is the world event of greatest moment in the near future.

In order to be practical, he has desired to make Shantiniketan itself into an international university.

where students and teachers from Europe may unite with those of India on the basis of a common fellowship in learning and research, while leading together a common student life. It was for the purpose of setting forward this practical plan, that he visited the West again in 1920 and 1921. In Europe, his reception this time was unique. The poet's teaching, concerning the meeting of East and West, and about the breaking down of national barriers, was listened to, not with the impatience of former times, but with the belief and the conviction of a new hope dawning for mankind. Two books have been sent to the press by the poet during his latest journey to the West. One is a volume of religious meditations called 'Thought Relics.' The other is called 'Creative Unity.' It deals with these problems of the East and West, and sets forth the ideal of union in one common humanity.

(VIII).

There remain still to be noticed certain volumes of short stories, novels, letters and dramas of Rabindranath Tagore.

The two books of short stories already published are called 'Hungry Stones' and 'Mashi'. A third volume is in course of preparation. A school edition, containing

selections from the short stories, has been recently issued by Macmillans. It is named 'Stories from Tagore'. Like this present book of selections, it is primarily intended for school and college use in India. Two novels have also been translated. The former, 'The Home and the World', has been already mentioned. The second is named 'The Wreck'. It has been translated by an Englishman belonging to the Indian Civil Service. Two volumes of personal records and letters have been issued under the titles 'Reminiscences' and 'Glimpses of Bengal'.

The dramas of Rabindranath Tagore, which have been already translated into English, require a somewhat longer description. The 'Post Office' has attained wide popularity on the stage in many different countries. It was originally written with a view to performance by the young boys and teachers of Shantiniketan school, and it is admirably adapted for that purpose. Its central character is a child, and there are other children's parts. The 'Cycle of Spring' also has been performed many times, both at Shantiniketan and in Calcutta. The music of the Song Preludes is one of the chief attractions of this drama. It has to be remembered that Rabindranath Tagore is as great in music, as he is great in song. His music now lives in

the hearts and on the lips of his own Bengali people, who have received this supreme gift at his hands. These songs, in 'The Cycle of Spring,' are intended to represent, both by music and by words, the final triumph of Youth over Death itself.

'Chitra' was the first of his dramatic works to be translated by Rabindranath Tagore into English. It is classical in its conception, and the translation retains the classical note of heroic greatness mingled with simplicity of action. 'The King of the Dark Chamber', on the other hand, is more complex. It is the most mystical of all the poet's dramas. It represents, under symbols and figures, the rebellious spirit of man drawn back at last by love, through failure and defeat, humbled and purified, into the divine presence. In a later volume of published dramas, named 'Sacrifice', the poet has greatly condensed the original construction of four of his Bengali tragedies. Here again, in this book of translations, there is the classic note. They remind the reader forcibly of the Greek drama in their setting.

(IX).

The fact should be borne carefully in mind that Rabindranath Tagore's works have now reached a much more extensive reading public than that of England and

America. Translations have been made from the English edition into every well-known language. In Central Europe, as I have shown, the fame of the poet as a great teacher of humanity has become more and more firmly established. He has been received, wherever he has been able to travel in different lands, not only as a poet, but also as a seer and a prophet. His personality has been a living inspiration to great multitudes of people, and they are studying to-day his thoughts as they have been given to them through the medium of their own vernaculars.

Among the smaller group of Western philosophic thinkers his conception of personality, which he has derived from the Upanishads, has attracted most attention. The teaching of the ten Upanishats has been, above all, the source of his own original thinking, and he has attempted to explain it to the West in his philosophical works.

A remarkable fact is this, that through his poems very many people of ordinary ability, who have not the artistic sense highly developed, have been able to learn from him something of that joy, which is at the heart of Creation and continually expresses itself in fresh forms of beauty. For Rabindranath Tagore's poetry is simple and direct in its appeal. This poem

delight which he has always been able to impart to the minds of simple-hearted people, who are leading commonplace lives. The letters, that he has received in overwhelming numbers from every continent, have borne ample witness to this power of bringing joy to the minds of men and women, and especially the young.

(X).

That the great popularity of Rabindranath Tagore has not depended only upon the singular beauty of his own English version of his poems, can be proved in the following manner. His spiritual influence among the multitudes of sincerely earnest seekers after truth has been greatest of all in quite recent times among those peoples whose mother tongue is not English or Bengali, and who have studied him only through the imperfect medium of translations *from* the English version. These translations were twice removed from the original Bengali language of the poet. Yet, even thus, the poet's living thoughts have reached their hearts and have been able to carry their own inspiration with them. Very few books in literature have been able to stand the strain of such a severe test of double translation. Only a simplicity of thought, which is elemental and universal, could bear it.

What has already happened in Central Europe is also more slowly taking place in Asia. I have described the effect of the poet's visit to Japan. News has recently reached me, that his philosophical works are receiving in Japan a thoroughness of individual research such as characteristically belongs to this most pains-taking people.

In the Turkish and Arabic speaking countries, and also in Armenia and Persia, 'The Gardener' has hitherto been the most popular among Rabindranath Tagore's works. This book has been translated, in the countries of Western Asia and North Africa, many times over.

In India itself, the home and birth place of the poet, every writing of his that is of permanent importance,—including many which have not yet been translated into English,—has had its own popular version in the different vernaculars. It is not too much to say that some of the Indian vernaculars can trace a new literary advance, and a breaking away from old artificial conventions, to the advent of Rabindranath Tagore's poetry.

(XI).

I wish now to attempt to explain the form of poetry which Rabindranath Tagore has made his own through his English translations.

First of all, it has to be noted that he has discarded strictly metrical patterns and rhymed endings. He has trusted entirely to his ear for the music of rhythmical phrase and beautiful word sounds. This gift of music in the poet's nature has fashioned its own English style. The musical instinct is perhaps the deepest quality that his whole personality possesses.

Furthermore, his power of choosing the right word, the inevitable phrase, which entirely satisfies the mind, has come to him in the first instance because he is so essentially an artist and a poet. He is able to trace,—as Keats has expressed it,—by 'the magic hand of chance', the picture he wishes to draw, instinctively, spontaneously, inevitably. Secondly, his own study of the English language has been through the medium of great literature. He has stooped his mind, with a poet's pure delight, in the English classics. Therefore his refinement of English literary taste has remained sensitive and keen. It has not been dulled by too close a familiarity with modern English forms of speech and writing.

It must also be carefully noticed that Rabindranath Tagore has allowed himself complete liberty with the original Bengali of his poems, when translating them into English. In some poems, the English version is

very close indeed to the original because the Bengali lent itself naturally to a literal translation. But in other instances, the Bengali poem has been transformed. That which was ornate has been removed. The thought of the original poem has been robed, as it were, in a simpler English dress. In this way, those things that are apt to jar upon the reader in ordinary translations have been avoided. There has been left no obstructing element that is obviously foreign. Yet all this has been done so instinctively that the pains taken in the process are not apparent. They read, not as translations, but as new English poems.

(XII).

In the history of English Literature, there is one most interesting analogy to the style that Rabindranath Tagore has naturally and spontaneously adopted; and this may be referred to at greater length. A similar and parallel difficulty of rendering Eastern poetry and song into English confronted the translators of the Bible in the reign of James I. They had before them the poetry of the Hebrew prophets. With the same unerring instinct as Rabindranath Tagore, they avoided the pitfall of versification and trusted entirely to their ear for musical sound and rhythm. They were great

men, living in a great period, and they succeeded. What havoc could be wrought by versification may be seen at a glance from a study of the metrical English version of the Book of Psalms, which was printed and published in the same literary Epoch.

Rabindranath Tagore was entirely unconscious beforehand of this precedent. As it happened, he had never studied the Old Testament. He discovered, as I have related, his own method of translation. His genius took its course and fashioned its own style. Nevertheless, it is an instructive literary coincidence to note that the genius of the translators, in both instances, gave them an independent judgment that the best method of rendering Eastern poetry into English is boldly to discard rhyme and metre and to trust alone to the music of rhythmical cadence and sound.

It is probable that one of the pleasing effects of Rabindranath Tagore's poems, as they linger in the minds of English readers, is a subtle reminiscence of rhythmical passages from the Bible, which have been familiar from childhood. Personally I feel certain that it is this which makes 'Gitanjali',—where the familiar cadences are most haunting,—the favourite among the writings of the Indian poet with the majority of ordinary English people. Such persons rely chiefly upon

on and familiar association while making their choice. When I have read out loud some from 'Gitanjali' and 'The Gardener' at public meetings, I have often found members of the audience g up to me after the lecture and saying: "What cited was like one of the beautiful passages of the "

(XIII).

I have thought that it might be of some help to some of my readers, who are Indian students, if I take a few passages almost at random from the Old Testament, and then give side by side some quotations from the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. This may best explain the analogy that I have tried to describe above.

First of all, the following passages from the Bible are to be read out loud, noticing the rise and fall of the voices and the language and imagery used :—

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for me ;

and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

And thou shalt say, Blessed be God, who hath opened the eyes of the blind, and the deaf shall hear, and the dumb shall speak ;

Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.

For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?

Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary.

And they shall walk and not faint."

"Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness.

And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

(XIV.)

After quoting such passages as these I would select the two following examples from the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, and would venture to put them side by side in order to show something of my meaning with regard to the rhythmic analogy :—

"Peace, my heart, let the time for the parting be
sweet.

Let it not be a death but completeness.

Let love melt into memory and pain into songs.

Let the flight through the sky end in the folding
of wings over the nest.

Let the last touch of your hands be gentle like
the flower of the night.

Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment, and say
your last words in silence.

I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on
your way."

"On the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him ?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life ; I will never let him go with empty hands.

All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life, will I place before him at the close of my days, when death will knock at my door."

(XV).

The authorised version of the English Bible was completed in the period of English Literature, which has been sometimes called the Elizabethan Age,—though it passes over into the reign of James I and beyond. It was the Golden Age, which began with Edmund Spenser and ended with John Milton. William Shakespeare wrote his great tragedies during the very same years that the authorised version of the Bible was being written. If, therefore, I am right in finding an unconscious similarity to the poetry of the Old Testament in the rhythm and music of Rabindranath Tagore, then the hope may be confidently expressed that these English translations will not be like an exotic in English literature, destined to perish as soon as some chilling

wind passes over them, but like the healthy vigorous plant that strikes its roots deep into the soil.

(XVI),

I find that a short postscript has to be added, in order to avoid a possible misunderstanding. In the narrative poems of Rabindranath Tagore this subtlety and delicacy of rhythm, about which I have been writing, cannot in the very nature of things be so developed as in the lyrics from which I have taken my two examples above. Yet they have a beauty of their own,—the beauty of a story poetically told and perfect in its form and manner of telling.

These narrative poems have a predominant place in this book of selections, because they are simpler for students to follow than poems of a subjective kind. It must be understood, however, that the bulk of Rabindranath Tagore's English poems are lyrical in quality. When these students, who may now be studying this book of selections, go on to read the complete volumes from which these extracts are taken, they will be able to appreciate more clearly what I have written concerning the form and style of the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore.

SELECTIONS FROM GITANJALI.

I

LIFE of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.

HERE is thy footstool and there rest thy feet
where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance
cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet
rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou
walkest in the clothes of the humble among the
poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou
keepest company with the companionless among
the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost.

LEAVE this chanting and singing and telling
of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this
lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all
shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not
before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard
ground and where the path-maker is breaking
stones. He is with them in sun and in shower
and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy

holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil !

Deliverance ? Where is this deliverance to be found ? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation ; he is bound with us all for ever,

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense ! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained ? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

4

My desires are many and my cry is pitiful, but ever didst thou save me by hard refusals ; and this strong mercy has been wrought into my life through and through.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple, great gifts that thou gavest to me unmasked—this sky and the light, this body and the life and the mind—saving me from perils of overmuch desire.

There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in search of my

goal ; but cruelly thou hidest thyself from before me.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain desire.

Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.

Let only that little be left of my will whereby I may feel thee on every side, and come to thee in everything, and offer to thee my love every moment.

Let only that little be left of me whereby I may never hide thee.

Let only that little of my fetters be left whereby I am bound with thy will, and thy purpose is carried out in my life—and that is the fetter of thy love.

WHERE the mind is without fear and the head is held high ;

Where knowledge is free ;

Where the world has not been broken up
into fragments by narrow domestic walls ;

Where words come out from the depth of
truth ;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms
towards perfection ;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost
its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit ;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into
ever-widening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let
my country awake.

7

THIS is my prayer to thee, my lord—strike, strike
at the root of penury in my heart.

Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys
and sorrows.

Give me the strength to make my love fruitful
in service.

Give me the strength never to disown the
poor or bend my knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind high
above daily trifles.

And give me the strength to surrender my
strength to thy will with love.

8

THAT I want thee, only thee—let my heart
repeat without end. All desires that distract me,
day and night, are false and empty to the core.

As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the
petition for light, even thus in the depth of my
unconsciousness rings the cry—I want thee,
only thee.

As the storm still seeks its end in peace when
it strikes against peace with all its might, even
thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still
its cry is—I want thee, only thee.

9

WHEN the heart is hard and parched up, come
upon me with a shower of mercy.

When grace is lost from life, come with a
burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all

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sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me,
my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.

When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut
up in a corner, break open the door, my king, and
come with the ceremony of a king.

When desire blinds the mind with delusion
and dust, O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come
with thy light and thy thunder.

10

THE rain has held back for days and days, my
God, in my arid heart. The horizon is fiercely
naked—not the thinnest cover of a soft cloud, not
the vaguest hint of a distant cool shower.

Send thy angry storm, dark with death, if it is
thy wish, and with lashes of lightning startle the
sky from end to end.

But call back, my lord, call back this per-
vading silent heat, still and keen and cruel, burn-
ing the heart with dire despair.

Let the cloud of grace bend low from above
like the tearful look of the mother on the day of
the father's wrath.

II

HAVE you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes.

Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes.

Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed "He comes, comes, ever comes."

In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes, comes, ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds he comes, comes, ever comes.

In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine.

I 2

I HAD gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all kings!

My hopes rose high and methought my evil

days were at an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be given unmasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say, "What hast thou to give to me?"

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.

THE night darkened. Our day's work had been done. We thought that the last guest had arrive

for the night and the doors in the village were all shut. Only some said, the king was to come. We laughed and said "No, it cannot be !"

It seemed there were knocks at the door and we said it was nothing but the wind. We put out the lamps and lay down to sleep. Only some said, "It is the messenger !" We laughed and said "No, it must be the wind !"

There came a sound in the dead of the night. We sleepily thought it was the distant thunder. The earth shook, the walls rocked, and it troubled us in our sleep. Only some said, it was the sound of wheels. We said in a drowsy murmur, "No, it must be the rumbling of clouds !"

The night was still dark when the drum sounded. The voice came "Wake up ! delay not !" We pressed our hands on our hearts and shuddered with fear. Some said, "Lo, there is the king's flag !" We stood up on our feet and cried "There is no time for delay !"

The king has come—but where are lights, where are wreaths ? Where is the throne to seat him ? Oh, shame, Oh, utter shame ! Where is the hall, the decorations ? Some one has said,

"Vain is this cry ! Greet him with empty hands,
lead him into thy rooms all bare !"

Open the doors, let the conch-shells be sounded !
In the depth of the night has come the king of
our dark, dreary house. The thunder roars in
the sky. The darkness shudders with lightning.
Bring out thy tattered piece of mat and spread it
in the courtyard. With the storm has come of a
sudden our king of the fearful night.

LIGHT, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-
kissing light, heart-sweetening light.

Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the
centre of my life ; the light strikes, my darling,
the chords of my love ; the sky opens, the wind
runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea
of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the
crest of the waves of light.

The light is shattered into gold on every
cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in pro-
fusion.

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling,
and gladness without measure. The heaven's
river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy
is abroad.

Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song—
the joy that makes the earth flow over in the
riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the
twin brothers, life and death, dancing over the
wide world, the joy that sweeps in with the tem-
pest, shaking and waking all life with laughter,
the joy that sits still with its tears on the open
red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws
everything it has upon the dust, and knows not
a word.

Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O
beloved of my heart—this golden light that dances
upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across
the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness
upon my forehead.

The morning light has flooded my eyes—this is thy message to my heart. Thy face is bent from above, thy eyes look down on my eyes, and my heart has touched thy feet

17

THY sunbeam comes upon this earth of mine with arms outstretched and stands at my door the livelong day to carry back to thy feet clouds made of my tears and sighs and songs.

With fond delight thou wrappest about thy starry breast that mantle of misty cloud, turning it into numberless shapes and folds and colouring it with hues everchanging.

It is so light and so fleeting, tender and tearful and dark, that is why thou lovest it, O thou spotless and serene. And that is why it may cover thy awful white light with its pathetic shadows.

18

THE same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

. 19

DELIVERANCE is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight,

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.

20

DAY after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face ? With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face ?

Under thy great sky in solitude and silence, with humble heart shall I stand before thee face to face ?

In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous with toil and with struggle, among hurrying crowds shall I stand before thee face to face ?

And when my work shall be done in this world, O King of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face ?

21

ON the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him ?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel

of my life—I will never let him go with empty hands.

All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.

22

IN one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.

SELECTIONS FROM THE GARDENER.

I

I AM restless. I am athirst for far-away things.

My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of the dim distance.

O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute !

I forget, I ever forget, that I have no wings to fly, that I am bound in this spot evermore.

I am eager and wakeful, I am a stranger in a strange land.

Thy breath comes to me whispering an impossible hope.

Thy tongue is known to my heart as its very own.

O Far-to-seek, O the keen call of thy flute !

I forget, I ever forget, that I know not the way, that I have not the winged horse.

I am listless, I am a wanderer in my heart.

In the sunny haze of the languid hours, what vast vision of thine takes shape in the blue of the sky !

O Farthest end, O the keen call of thy flute !

I forget, I ever forget, that the gates are shut everywhere in the house where I dwell alone !

2

I PLUCKED your flower, O world !

I pressed it to my heart and the thorn pricked.

When the day waned and it darkened, I found that the flower had faded, but the pain remained.

More flowers will come to you with perfume and pride, O world !

But my time for flower-gathering is over, and through the dark night I have not my rose, only the pain remains.

3

ONE morning in the flower garden a blind girl came to offer me a flower chain in the cover of a lotus leaf.

I put it round my neck, and tears came to my eyes.

I kissed her and said, "You are blind even as the flowers are.

"You yourself know not how beautiful is your gift."

4

PEACE, my heart, let the time for the parting be sweet.

Let it not be a death but completeness.

Let love melt into memory and pain into songs.

Let the flight through the sky end in the folding of the wings over the nest.

Let the last touch of your hands be gentle like
the flower of the night.

Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment,
and say your last words in silence,

I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light
you on your way.

5

TRAVELLER, must you go ?

The night is still and the darkness swoons
upon the forest.

The lamps are bright in our balcony, the
flowers all fresh, and the youthful eyes still awake.

Is the time for your parting come ?

Traveller, must you go ?

We have not bound your feet with our entreat-
ing arms.

Your doors are open. Your horse stands
saddled at the gate.

If we have tried to bar your passage it was
but with our songs.

Did we ever try to hold you back, it was but
with our eyes.

Traveller, we are helpless to keep you. We
have only our tears.

What quenchless fire glows in your eyes ?
What restless fever runs in your blood ?

What call from the dark urges you ?

What awful incantation have you read among
the stars in the sky, that with a sealed secret
message the night entered your heart, silent and
strange ?

If you do not care for merry meetings, if you
must have peace, weary heart, we shall put our
lamps out and silence our harps.

We shall sit still in the dark in the rustle of
leaves, and the tired moon will shed pale rays on
your window.

O traveller, what sleepless spirit has touched
you from the heart of the midnight ?

A WANDERING madman was seeking the touch-stone, with matted locks, tawny and dust-laden, and body worn to a shadow, his lips tight pressed, like the shut-up doors of his heart, his burning eyes like the lamp of a glow-worm seeking its mate.

Before him the endless ocean roared.

The garrulous waves ceaselessly talked of hidden treasures, mocking the ignorance that knew not their meaning.

May be he now had no hope remaining, yet he would not rest, for the search had become his life,—

Just as the ocean for ever lifts its arms to the sky for the unattainable—

Just as the stars go in circles, yet seeking a goal that can never be reached—

Even so on the lonely shore the madman with dusty tawny locks still roamed in search of the touchstone.

One day a village boy came up and asked, "Tell me, where did you come at this golden chain about your waist?"

The madman started—the chain that once was iron was verily gold; it was not a dream, but he did not know when it had changed.

He struck his forehead wildly—where, O where had he without knowing it achieved success?

It had grown into a habit to pick up pebbles and touch the chain, and to throw them away without looking to see if a change had come; thus the madman found and lost the touchstone.

The sun was sinking low in the west, the sky was of gold.

The madman returned on his footsteps to seek anew the lost treasure, with his strength gone, his body bent, and his heart in the dust, like a tree uprooted.

7

I REMEMBER a day in my childhood I floated a paper boat in the ditch.

It was a wet day of July ; I was alone and happy over my play.

I floated my paper boat in the ditch.

Suddenly the storm clouds thickened, winds came in gusts, and rain poured in torrents.

Rills of muddy water rushed and swelled the stream and sunk my boat.

Bitterly I thought in my mind that the storm came on purpose to spoil my happiness ; all its malice was against me.

The cloudy day of July is long to-day, and I have been musing over all those games in life wherein I was loser.

I was blaming my fate for the many tricks it played on me, when suddenly I remembered the paper boat that sank in the ditch.

THE day is not yet done, the fair is not over, the fair on the river-bank.

I had feared that my time had been squandered and my last penny lost.

But no, my brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The selling and buying are over.

All the dues on both sides have been gathered in, and it is time for me to go home.

But, gatekeeper, do you ask for your toll ?

Do not fear, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The lull in the wind threatens storm and the lowering clouds in the west bode no good.

The hushed water waits for the wind.

I hurry to cross the river before the night overtakes me.

O ferryman, you want your fee !

Yes, brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

In the wayside under the tree sits the beggar. Alas, he looks at my face with a timid hope !

He thinks I am rich with the day's profit.

Yes, brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The night grows dark and the road lonely,
Fireflies gleam among the leaves.

Who are you that follow me with stealthy
silent steps ?

Ah, I know, it is your desire to rob me of all
my gains. I will not disappoint you !

For I still have something left, and my fate
has not cheated me of everything.

At midnight I reach home. My hands are
empty.

You are waiting with anxious eyes at my door,
sleepless and silent.

Like a timorous bird you fly to my breast
with eager love.

Ay, ay, my God, much remains still. My fate
has not cheated me of everything.

9

INFINITE wealth is not yours, my patient and
dusky mother dust !

You toil to fill the mouths of your children,
but food is scarce.

The gift of gladness that you have for us
is never perfect.

The toys that you make for your children are
fragile.

You cannot satisfy all our hungry hopes, but
should I desert you for that ?

Your smile which is shadowed with pain is
sweet to my eyes.

Your love which knows not fulfilment is dear
to my heart.

From your breast you have fed us with life
but not immortality, that is why your eyes are
ever wakeful.

For ages you are working with colour and song,
yet your heaven is not built, but only its sad
suggestion.

Over your creations of beauty there is the
mist of tears.

I will pour my songs into your mute heart,
and my love into your love.

I will worship you with labour.

I have seen your tender face and I love your
mournful dust, Mother Earth.

IO

IN the world's audience hall, the simple blade of
grass sits on the same carpet with the sunbeam
and the stars of midnight.

Thus my songs share their seats in the heart of
the world with the music of the clouds and forests.

But, you man of riches, your wealth has no
part in the simple grandeur of the sun's glad gold
and the mellow gleam of the musing moon.

The blessing of the all-embracing sky is not
shed upon it.

And when death appears, it pales and withers
and crumbles into dust.

II

AT midnight the would-be ascetic announced :

"This is the time to give up my home and

seek for God. Ah, who has held me so long in delusion here ? ”

God whispered, “ I,” but the ears of the man were stopped.

With a baby asleep at her breast lay his wife, peacefully sleeping on one side of the bed.

The man said, “ Who are ye that have fooled me so long ? ”

The voice said again, “ They are God,” but he heard it not.

The baby cried out in its dream, nestling close to its mother.

God commanded, “ Stop, fool, leave not thy home,” but still he heard not.

God sighed and complained, “ Why does my servant wander to seek me, forsaking me ? ”

12

THE fair was on before the temple. It had rained from the early morning and the day came to its end.

Brighter than all the gladness of the crowd

was the bright smile of a girl who bought for a farthing a whistle of palm leaf.

The shrill joy of that whistle floated above all laughter and noise.

An endless throng of people came and jostled together. The road was muddy, the river in flood, the field under water in ceaseless rain.

Greater than all the troubles of the crowd was a little boy's trouble—he had not a farthing to buy a painted stick.

His wistful eyes gazing at the shop made this whole meeting of men so pitiful.

13

THE workman and his wife from the west country are busy digging to make bricks for the kiln.

Their little daughter goes to the landing-place by the river ; there she has no end of scouring and scrubbing of pots and pans.

Her little brother, with shaven head and brown, naked, mud-covered limbs, follows after her and waits patiently on the high bank at her bidding.

She goes back home with the full pitcher poised on her head, the shining brass pot in her left hand, holding the child with her right—she the tiny servant of her mother, grave with the weight of the household cares.

One day I saw this naked boy sitting with legs outstretched.

In the water his sister sat rubbing a drinking-pot with a handful of earth, turning it round and round.

Near by a soft-haired lamb stood grazing along the bank.

It came close to where the boy sat and suddenly bleated aloud, and the child started up and screamed.

His sister left off cleaning her pot and ran up.

She took up her brother in one arm and the lamb in the other, and dividing her caresses between them bound in one bond of affection the offspring of beast and man.

It was in May. The sultry noon seemed end-

lessly long. The dry earth gaped with thirst in the heat,

When I heard from the riverside a voice calling, "Come, my darling!"

I shut my book and opened the window to look out.

I saw a big buffalo with mud-stained hide standing near the river with placid, patient eyes; and a youth, knee-deep in water, calling it to its bath.

I smiled amused and felt a touch of sweetness in my heart.

I OFTEN wonder where lie hidden the boundaries of recognition between man and the beast whose heart knows no spoken language.

Through what primal paradise in a remote morning of creation ran the simple path by which their hearts visited each other.

Those marks of their constant tread have not been effaced, though their kinship has been long forgotten.

Yet suddenly in some wordless music the dim memory wakes up and the beast gazes into the man's face with a tender trust, and the man looks down into its eyes with amused affection.

It seems that the two friends meet masked, and vaguely know each other through the disguise.

16

Over the green and yellow rice-fields sweep the shadows of the autumn clouds followed by the swift-chasing sun.

The bees forget to sip their honey ; drunken with light they foolishly hover and hum.

The ducks in the islands of the river clamour in joy for mere nothing.

Let none go back home, brothers, this morning, let none go to work.

Let us take the blue sky by storm and plunder space as we run.

Laughter floats in the air like foam on the flood.

Brothers, let us squander our morning in futile songs.

SELECTIONS FROM THE CRESCENT MOON.

I

THE HOME.

I PAVED alone on the road across the field while the sunset was hiding its last gold like a miser.

The daylight sank deeper and deeper into the darkness, and the widowed land, whose harvest had been reaped, lay silent.

Suddenly a boy's shrill voice rose into the sky. He traversed the dark unseen, leaving the track of his song across the hush of the evening.

His village home lay there at the end of the waste land, beyond the sugar-cane field, hidden among the shadows of the banana and the slender

areca palm, the cocoa-nut and the dark green jack-fruit trees.

I stopped for a moment in my lonely way under the starlight, and saw spread before me the darkened earth surrounding with her arms countless homes furnished with cradles and beds, mothers' hearts and evening lamps, and young lives glad with a gladness that knows nothing of its value for the world.

2

BABY'S WAY.

If baby only wanted to, he could fly up to heaven this moment.

It is not for nothing that he does not leave us.

He loves to rest his head on mother's bosom, and cannot ever bear to lose sight of her.

Baby knows all manner of wise words, though few on earth can understand their meaning.

It is not for nothing that he never wants to speak.

The one thing he wants is to learn mother's words from mother's lips. That is why he looks so innocent.

Baby had a heap of gold and pearls, yet he came like a beggar on to this earth.

It is not for nothing he came in such a disguise.

This dear little naked mendicant pretends to be utterly helpless, so that he may beg for mother's wealth of love.

Baby was so free from every tie in the land of the tiny crescent moon.

It was not for nothing he gave up his freedom.

He knows that there is room for endless joy in mother's little corner of a heart, and it is sweeter far than liberty to be caught and pressed in her dear arms.

Baby never knew how to cry. He dwelt in the land of perfect bliss.

It is not for nothing he has chosen to shed tears.

Though with the smile of his dear face he draws mother's yearning heart to him, yet his little cries over tiny troubles weave the double bond of pity and love.

3

SLEEP-STEALER:

WHO stole sleep from baby's eyes? I must know.

Clasping her pitcher to her waist mother went to fetch water from the village near by.

It was noon. The children's playtime was over; the ducks in the pond were silent.

The shepherd boy lay asleep under the shadow of the *banyan* tree.

The crane stood grave and still in the swamp near the mango grove.

In the meanwhile the Sleep-stealer came, and snatching sleep from baby's eyes, flew away.

When mother came back she found baby travelling the room over on all fours.

Who stole sleep from our baby's eyes? I must know. I must find her and chain her up.

I must look into that dark cave, where, through boulders and seowling stones, trickles a tiny stream.

I must search in the drowsy shade of the *bakula* grove, where pigeons coo in their corner, and fairies' anklets tinkle in the stillness of starry nights.

In the evening I will peep into the whispering silence of the bamboo forest, where fire-flies squander their light, and will ask every creature I meet, "Can anybody tell me where the Sleep-stealer lives?"

Who stole sleep from baby's eyes? I must know.

Shouldn't I give her a good lesson if I could only catch her!

I would raid her nest and see where she hoards all her stolen sleep.

I would plunder it all, and carry it home.

I would bind her two wings securely, set her on the bank of the river, and then let her play at fishing with a reed among the rushes and water-lilies.

When the marketing is over in the evening, and the village children sit in their mothers' laps, then the night birds will mockingly din her ears with :

“ Whose sleep will you steal now ? ”

4

WHEN AND WHY.

WHEN I bring you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints—when I give coloured toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance, I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth—when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands, I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower, and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice—when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.

When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what pleasure streams from the sky in morning light, and what delight the summer breeze brings to my body—when I kiss you to make you smile.

5

THE JUDGE.

SAY of him what you please, but I know my child's failings.

I do not love him because he is good, but because he is my little child.

How should you know how dear he can be when you try to weigh his merits against his faults?

When I must punish him he becomes all the more a part of my being.

When I cause his tears to come my heart weeps with him.

I alone have a right to blame and punish, for he only may chastise who loves.

6

PLAYTHINGS.

CHILD, how happy you are sitting in the dust,
playing with a broken twig all the morning.

I smile at your play with that little bit of a
broken twig.

I am busy with my accounts, adding up
figures by the hour.

Perhaps you glance at me and think, "What
a stupid game to spoil your morning with!"

Child, I have forgotten the art of being absorb-
ed in sticks and mud-pies.

I seek out costly playthings, and gather lumps
of gold and silver.

With whatever you find you create your glad
games, I spend both my time and my strength
over things I never can obtain.

In my frail canoe I struggle to cross the sea
of desire, and forget that I too am playing a
game.

7

CLOUDS AND WAVES.

MOTHER, the folk who live up in the clouds call out to me—

“We play from the time we wake till the day ends.

We play with the golden dawn, we play with the silver moon.”

I ask, “But, how am I to get up to you?”

They answer, “Come to the edge of the earth, lift up your hands to the sky, and you will be taken up into the clouds.”

“My mother is waiting for me at home,” I say. “How can I leave her and come?”

Then they smile and float away.

But I know a nicer game than that, mother.

I shall be the cloud and you the moon.

I shall cover you with both my hands, and our house-top will be the blue sky.

The folk who live in the waves call out to me—

“We sing from morning till night; on and on we travel and know not where we pass.”

ask, "But, how am I to join you?"
They tell me, "Come to the edge of the
e and stand with your eyes tight shut, and
will be carried out upon the waves."

say, "My mother always wants me at
e in the evening—how can I leave her
go?"

Then they smile, dance and pass by.

But I know a better game than that.

I will be the waves and you will be a strange
re,

I shall roll on and on and on, and break upon
r lap with laughter.

And no one in the world will know where we
h are.

8

THE CHAMPA FLOWER.

PROPOSING I became a *champa* flower, just for
, and grew on a branch high up that tree, and
look in the wind with laughter and danced upon
: newly budded leaves, would you know me,
other?

You would call, "Baby, where are you?" and I should laugh to myself and keep quite quiet.

I should slyly open my petals and watch you at your work.

When after your bath, with wet hair spread on your shoulders, you walked through the shadow of the *champa* tree to the little court where you say your prayers, you would notice the scent of the flower, but not know that it came from me.

When after the midday meal you sat at the window reading *Ramayana*, and the tree's shadow fell over your hair and your lap, I should fling my wee little shadow on to the page of your book, just where you were reading.

But would you guess that it was the tiny shadow of your little child?

When in the evening you went to the cow-shed with the lighted lamp in your hand, I should suddenly drop on to the earth again and be your own baby once more, and beg you to tell me a story.

"Where have you been, you naughty child?"

"I won't tell you, mother." That's what you and I would say then.

9

FAIRYLAND.

If people came to know where my king's palace is, it would vanish into the air.

The walls are of white silver and the roof of shining gold.

The queen lives in a palace with seven courtyards, and she wears a jewel that cost all the wealth of seven kingdoms.

But let me tell you, mother, in a whisper, where my king's palace is.

It is at the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tu/si* plant stands.

The princess lies sleeping on the far-away shore of the seven impassable seas.

There is none in the world who can find her but myself.

She has bracelets on her arms and pearl drops in her ears ; her hair sweeps down upon the floor.

She will wake when I touch her with my magic wand, and jewels will fall from her lips when she smiles.

But let me whisper in your ear, mother ; she is there in the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.

When it is time for you to go to the river for your bath, step up to that terrace on the roof.

I sit in the corner where the shadows of the walls meet together.

Only puss is allowed to come with me, for she knows where the barber in the story lives.

But let me whisper, mother, in your ear where the barber in the story lives.

It is at the corner of the terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.

10

THE RAINY DAY.

Sullen clouds are gathering fast over the black fringe of the forest.

O child, do not go out !

The palm trees in a row by the lake are smiting their heads against the dismal sky ; the

crows with their dragged wings are silent on the tamarind branches, and the eastern bank of the river is haunted by a deepening gloom.

Our cow is lowing loud, tied at the fence.

O child, wait here till I bring her into the stall.

Men have crowded into the flooded field to catch the fishes as they escape from the overflowing ponds ; the rain water is running in rills through the narrow lanes, like a laughing boy who has run away from his mother to tease her.

Listen, someone is shouting for the boatman at the ford.

O child, the daylight is dim, and the crossing at the ferry is closed.

The sky seems to ride fast upon the madly-rushing rain ; the water in the river is loud and impatient ; women have hastened home early from the Ganges with their filled pitchers.

The evening lamps must be made ready.

O child, do not go out !

The road to the market is desolate, the lane to the river is slippery. The wind is roaring and struggling among the bamboo branches like a wild beast tangled in a net.

11

PAPER BOATS.

DAY by day I float my paper boats one by one down the running stream.

In big black letters I write my name on them and the name of the village where I live.

I hope that someone in some strange land will find them and know who I am.

I load my little boats with *shinji* flowers from our garden, and hope that these blooms of the dawn will be carried safely to land in the night.

I launch my paper boats and look up into the sky and see the little clouds setting their white bulging sails.

I know not what playmate of mine in the sky sends them down the air to race with my boats!

When night comes I bury my face in my arms
and dream that my paper boats float on and on
under the midnight stars.

The fairies of sleep are sailing in them, and
the lading is their baskets full of dreams.

12

THE FLOWER-SCHOOL.

WHEN storm clouds rumble in the sky and June
showers come down,

The moist east wind comes marching over
the heath to blow its bagpipes among the
bamboos.

Then crowds of flowers come out of a sudden,
from nobody knows where, and dance upon the
grass in wild glee.

Mother, I really think the flowers go to school
underground.

They do their lessons with doors shut, and
if they want to come out to play before it is time,
their master makes them stand in a corner.

When the rains come they have their holidays.

Branches clash together in the forest, and the leaves rustle in the wild wind, the thunder-clouds clap their giant hands and the flower children rush out in dresses of pink and yellow and white.

Do you know, mother, their home is in the sky, where the stars are.

Haven't you seen how eager they are to get there? Don't you know why they are in such a hurry?

Of course, I can guess to whom they raise their arms: they have their mother as I have my own.

13

THE HERO.

MOTHER, let us imagine we are travelling, and passing through a strange and dangerous country.

You are riding in a palanquin and I am trotting by you on a red horse.

It is evening and the sun goes down. The waste of *Joradhigi* lies wan and grey before us. The land is desolate and barren.

You are frightened and thinking—"I know not where we have come to."

I say to you, "Mother, do not be afraid."

The meadow is prickly with spiky grass, and through it runs a narrow broken path.

There are no cattle to be seen in the wide field; they have gone to their village stalls.

It grows dark and dim on the land and sky, and we cannot tell where we are going.

Suddenly you call me and ask me in a whisper, "What light is that near the bank?"

Just then there bursts out a fearful yell, and figures come running towards us.

You sit crouched in your palanquin and repeat the names of the gods in prayer.

The bearers, shaking in terror, hide themselves in the thorny bush.

I shout to you, "Don't be afraid, mother. I am here,"

With long sticks in their hands and hair all wild about their heads, they come nearer and nearer.

I shout, "Have a care! you villains! One step more and you are dead men."

They give another terrible yell and rush forward.

You clutch my hand and say, "Dear boy, for heaven's sake, keep away from them."

I say, "Mother, just you watch me."

Then I spur my horse for a wild gallop, and my sword and buckler clash against each other.

The fight becomes so fearful, mother, that it would give you a cold shudder could you see it from your palanquin.

Many of them fly, and a great number are cut to pieces.

I know you are thinking, sitting all by yourself, that your boy must be dead by this time.

But I come to you all stained with blood, and say, "Mother, the fight is over now."

You come out and kiss me, pressing me to your heart, and you say to yourself,

"I don't know what I should do if I hadn't my boy to escort me."

A thousand useless things happen day after day, and why couldn't such a thing come true by chance ?

It would be like a story in a book.

My brother would say, "Is it possible ? I always thought he was so delicate !"

Our village people would all say in amazement, "Was it not lucky that the boy was with his mother ?"

THE END.

It is time for me to go, mother ; I am going. When in the paling darkness of the lonely dawn you stretch out your arms for your baby in the bed, I shall say, "Baby is not there !"—mother I am going.

I shall become a delicate draught of air and caress you ; and I shall be ripples in the water when you bathe, and kiss you and kiss you again.

In the gusty night when the rain patters on the leaves you will hear my whisper in your bed, and my laughter will flash with the lightning through the open window into your room.

If you lie awake, thinking of your baby till late into the night, I shall sing to you from the stars, "Sleep, mother, sleep."

On the straying moonbeams I shall steal over your bed, and lie upon your bosom while you sleep.

I shall become a dream, and through the little opening of your eyelids I shall slip into the depths of your sleep; and when you wake up and look round startled, like a twinkling firefly I shall flit out into the darkness.

When, on the great festival of *pūja*, the neighbours' children come and play about the house, I shall melt into the music of the flute and throb in your heart all day.

Dear auntie will come with *pūja*-presents and will ask, "Where is our baby, sister?" Mother, you will tell her softly, "He is in the pupils of my eyes, he is in my body and in my soul."

15

THE FIRST JASMINES.

AH, these jasmines, these white jasmines !

I seem to remember the first day when I filled my hands with these jasmines, these white jasmines.

I have loved the sunlight, the sky and the green earth ;

I have heard the liquid murmur of the river through the darkness of midnight ;

Autumn sunsets have come to me at the bend of a road in the lonely waste, like a bride raising her veil to accept her lover.

Yet my memory is still sweet with the first white jasmines that I held in my hand when I was a child.

Many a glad day has come in my life, and I have laughed with merry-makers on festival nights.

On grey mornings of rain I have crooned many an idle song.

I have worn round my neck the evening
wreath of *bakulas* woven by the hand of love.

Yet my heart is sweet with the memory of
the first fresh jasmynes that filled my hands when
I was a child.

BENEDICTION.

Bless this little heart, this white soul that has
won the kiss of heaven for our earth.

He loves the light of the sun, he loves the
sight of his mother's face.

He has not learned to despise the dust, and to
hanker after gold.

Clasp him to your heart and bless him.

He has come into this land of an hundred
cross-roads.

I know not how he chose you from the crowd,
came to your door, and grasped your hand to ask
his way.

He will follow you, laughing and talking, and
not a doubt in his heart.

Keep his trust, lead him straight and bless him.

Lay your hand on his head, and pray that
though the waves underneath grow threatening,
yet the breath from above may come and fill his
sails and waft him to the haven of peace.

Forget him not in your hurry, let him come
to your heart and bless him.

17

THE CHILD-ANGEL.

THEY clamour and fight, they doubt and despair,
they know no end to their wranglings.

Let your life come amongst them like a flame
of light, my child, unflickering and pure, and
delight them into silence.

They are cruel in their greed and their envy,
their words are like hidden knives thirsting for
blood.

Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, my
child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them like
the forgiving peace of the evening over the strife
of the day.

Let them see your face, my child, and thus know the meaning of all things ; let them love you and thus love each other.

Come and take your seat in the bosom of the limitless, my child. At sunrise open and raise your heart like a blossoming flower, and at sunset bend your head and in silence complete the worship of the day.

18

THE LAST BARGAIN.

"COME and hire me," I cried, while in the morning I was walking on the stone-paved road.

Sword in hand, the King came in his chariot.

He held my hand and said, "I will hire you with my power."

But his power counted for nought, and he went away in his chariot.

In the heat of the midday the houses stood with shut doors.

I wandered along the crooked lane.

An old man came out with his bag of gold.

He pondered and said, "I will hire you with my money."

He weighed his coins one by one, but I turned away.

It was evening. The garden hedge was all aflower.

The fair maid came out and said, "I will hire you with a smile."

Her smile paled and melted into tears, and she went back alone into the dark.

The sun glistened on the sand, and the sea waves broke waywardly.

A child sat playing with shells.

He raised his head and seemed to know me, and said, "I hire you with nothing."

From thenceforward that bargain struck in child's play made me a free man.

SELECTIONS FROM FRUIT- GATHERING.

I

FAR below flowed the Jimna, swift and clear,
above frowned the jutting bank.

Hills dark with the woods and scarred with
the torrents were gathered around.

Govinda, the great Sikh teacher, sat on the
rock reading scriptures, when Raghunath, his
disciple, proud of his wealth, came and bowed to
him and said, "I have brought my poor present
unworthy of your acceptance."

Thus saying he displayed before the teacher
a pair of gold bangles wrought with costly stones.

The master took up one of them, twirling it round his finger, and the diamonds darted shafts of light.

Suddenly it slipped from his hand and rolled down the bank into the water.

"Alas," screamed Raghunath, and jumped into the stream.

The teacher set his eyes upon his book, and the water held and hid what it stole and went its way.

The daylight faded when Raghunath came back to the teacher tired and dripping.

He panted and said, "I can still get it back if you show me where it fell."

The teacher took up the remaining bangle and throwing it into the water said, "It is there."

2

To move is to meet you every moment,
Fellow-traveller !

It is to sing to the falling of your feet.

He whom your breath touches does not glide
by the shelter of the bank.

He spreads a reckless sail to the wind and
rides the turbulent water.

He who throws his doors open and steps onward receives your greeting.

He does not stay to count his gain or to mourn his loss ; his heart beats the drum for his march, for that is to march with you every step,
Fellow-traveller !

3

SUDĀS, the gardener, plucked from his tank the last lotus left by the ravage of winter and went to sell it to the king at the palace gate.

There he met a traveller who said to him, "Ask your price for the last lotus,—I shall offer it to Lord Buddha."

Sudās said, "If you pay one golden *māshā* it will be yours."

The traveller paid it.

At that moment the king came out and he wished to buy the flower, for he was on his way to see Lord Buddha, and he thought, "It would be a fine thing to lay at his feet the lotus that bloomed in winter."

When the gardener said he had been offered golden *māshā* the king offered him ten, but the seller doubled the price.

The gardener, being greedy, imagined a greater in from him for whose sake they were bidding.

He bowed and said, "I cannot sell this for us."

In the hushed shade of the mango grove yond the city wall Sudās stood before Lord Buddha, on whose lips sat the silence of love and whose eyes beamed peace like the morning star of the dew-washed autumn.

Sudās looked in his face and put the lotus at his feet and bowed his head to the dust.

Buddha smiled and asked, "What is your wish, my son?"

Sudās cried, "The least touch of your feet."

4

ANĀTAN was telling his beads by the Ganges when a Brahmin in rags came to him and said, "Help me, I am poor!"

"My alms-bowl is all that is my own," said Sanātan, "I have given away everything I had."

"But my lord Shiva came to me in my dreams," said the Brahmin, "and counselled me to come to you."

Sanātan suddenly remembered he had picked up a stone without price among the pebbles on the river-bank, and thinking that some one might need it hid it in the sands.

He pointed out the spot to the Brahmin, who wondering dug up the stone.

The Brahmin sat on the earth and mused alone till the sun went down behind the trees, and cowherds went home with their cattle.

Then he rose and came slowly to Sanātan and said, "Master, give me the least fraction of the wealth that disdains all the wealth of the world."

And he threw the precious stone into the water.

5

"WHO among you will take up the duty of feeding the hungry?" Lord Buddha asked his followers when famine raged at Shravasti.

Ratnākar, the banker, hung his head and said, "Much more is needed than all my wealth to feed the hungry."

Jaysen, the chief of the King's army, said, "I would gladly give my life's blood, but there is not enough food in my house."

Dharmapāl, who owned broad acres of land, said with a sigh, "The drought demon has sucked my fields dry. I know not how to pay the King's dues."

Then rose Supriyā, the mendicant's daughter.

She bowed to all and meekly said, "I will feed the hungry."

"How?" they cried in surprise. "How can you hope to fulfil that vow?"

Whose feet were those tinkling with anklets,
touching his breast of a sudden?

He woke up startled, and the light from a
woman's lamp struck his forgiving eyes.

It was the dancing girl, starred with jewels,
clouded with a pale-blue mantle, drunk with the
wine of her youth.

She lowered her lamp and saw the young face,
austere, beautiful.

"Forgive me, young ascetic," said the woman;
"graciously come to my house. The dusty earth
is not a fit bed for you."

The ascetic answered, "Woman, go on your
way; when the time is ripe I will come to you."

Suddenly the black night showed its teeth in
a flash of lightning.

The storm growled from the corner of the
sky, and the woman trembled in fear.

The branches of the wayside trees were aching
with blossom.

Gay notes of the flute came floating in the warm spring air from afar.

The citizens had gone to the woods, to the festival of flowers.

From the mid-sky gazed the full moon on the shadows of the silent town.

The young ascetic was walking in the lonely street, while overhead the lovesick *koels* urged from the mango branches their sleepless plaint.

Upagupta passed through the city gates, and stood at the base of the rampart.

What woman lay in the shadow of the wall at his feet, struck with the black pestilence, her body spotted with sores, hurriedly driven away from the town ?

The ascetic sat by her side, taking her head on his knees, and moistened her lips with water and smeared her body with balm.

"Who are you, merciful one?" asked the woman.

"The time, at last, has come to visit you, and I am here," replied the young ascetic.

8

Over the relic of Lord Buddha King Bimbisār built a shrine, a salutation in white marble.

There in the evening would come all the brides and daughters of the King's house to offer flowers and light lamps.

When the son became king in his time he washed his father's creed away with blood, and lit sacrificial fires with its sacred books.

The autumn day was dying.

The evening hour of worship was near.

Shrimati, the queen's maid, devoted to Lord Buddha, having bathed in holy water, and decked the golden tray with lamps and fresh white blossoms, silently raised her dark eyes to the queen's face.

The queen shuddered in fear and said, "Do you not know, foolish girl, that death is the penalty for the one who brings worship to Buddha's shrine ?

Such is the king's will."

Shrimati bowed to the queen, and turning away from her door came and stood before Amitā, the newly wed bride of the king's son.

A mirror of burnished gold on her lap, the newly wed bride was braiding her dark long tresses and painting the red spot of good luck at the parting of her hair.

Her hands trembled when she saw the young maid, and she cried, "What fearful peril would you bring me? Leave me this instant."

Princess Shuklā sat at the window reading her book of romance by the light of the setting sun.

She started when she saw at her door the maid with the sacred offerings

Her book fell down from her lap, and she whispered in Shrimati's ears, "Rush not to death, daring woman!"

Shrimati walked from door to door.

She raised her head and cried, "O women of the king's house, hasten!

The time for our Lord's worship is come!"

Some shut their doors in her face and some reviled her.

The last gleam of daylight faded from the bronze dome of the palace tower.

Deep shadows settled in street corners ; the bustle of the city was hushed ; the gong at the temple of Shiva announced the time of the evening prayer.

In the dark of the autumn evening, deep as a limpid lake, stars throbbled with light, when the guards of the palace garden were startled to see through the trees a row of lamps burning at the shrine of Buddha.

They ran with their swords unsheathed, crying,
“ Who are you, foolish one, reckless of death ? ”

“ I am Shrimati,” replied a sweet voice, “ the servant of Lord Buddha.”

The next moment her heart’s blood coloured the cold marble with its red.

And in the still hour of stars died the light of the last lamp of worship at the foot of the shrine.

9

TULSIDAS, the poet, was wandering, deep in thought, by the Ganges, in that lonely spot where they burn their dead.

He found a woman sitting at the feet of the corpse of her dead husband, gaily dressed as for a wedding.

She rose as she saw him, bowed to him, and said, "Permit me, Master, with your blessing, to follow my husband to heaven."

"Why such hurry, my daughter?" asked Tulsidas. "Is not this earth also His who made heaven?"

"For heaven I do not long," said the woman. "I want my husband."

Tulsidas smiled and said to her, "Go back to your home, my child. Before the month is over you will find your husband."

The woman went back with glad hope. Tulsidas came to her every day and gave her high thoughts to think, till her heart was filled to the brim with divine love.

When the month was scarcely over, her neighbours came to her, asking, "Woman, have you found your husband?"

The widow smiled and said, "I have."

Eagerly they asked, "Where is he?"

"In my heart is my lord, one with me," said the woman.

10

THE sun had set on the western margin of the river among the tangle of the forest.

The hermit boys had brought the cattle home, and sat round the fire to listen to the master, Gautama, when a strange boy came, and greeted him with fruits and flowers, and, bowing low at his feet, spoke in a bird-like voice—"Lord, I have come to thee to be taken into the path of the supreme Truth.

My name is Satyakāma."

"Blessings be on thy head," said the master."

"Of what clan art thou, my child? It is

only fitting for a Brahmin to aspire to the highest wisdom."

"Master," answered the boy, "I know not of what clan I am. I shall go and ask my mother."

Thus saying, Satyakāma took leave, and wading across the shallow stream, came back to his mother's hut, which stood at the end of the sandy waste at the edge of the sleeping village.

The lamp burnt dimly in the room, and the mother stood at the door in the dark waiting for her son's return.

She clasped him to her bosom, kissed him on his hair, and asked him of his errand to the master.

"What is the name of my father, dear mother?" asked the boy.

"It is only fitting for a Brahmin to aspire to the highest wisdom," said Lord Gautama to me.

The woman lowered her eyes, and spoke in a whisper.

"In my youth I was poor and had many

masters. Thou didst come to thy mother Jabālā's
[arms, my darling, who had no husband."

The early rays of the sun glistened on the tree-tops of the forest hermitage.

The students, with their tangled hair still wet with their morning bath, sat under the ancient tree, before the master.

There came Satyakāma.

He bowed low at the feet of the sage, and stood silent.

"Tell me," the great teacher asked him, "of what clan art thou?"

"My lord," he answered, "I know it not. My mother said when I asked her, 'I had served many masters in my youth, and thou hadst come to thy mother Jabālā's arms, who had no husband.'"

There rose a murmur like the angry hum of bees disturbed in their hive; and the students muttered at the shameless insolence of that outcast.

Master Gantama rose from his seat, stretched out his arms, took the boy to his bosom, and said, "Best of all Brahmins art thou, my child. Thou hast the noblest heritage of truth."

11

Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers,
but to be fearless in facing them.

Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but
for the heart to conquer it.

Let me not look for allies in life's battle field,
but to my own strength.

Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved,
but hope for the patience to win my freedom.

Grant me that I may not be a coward, feeling
your mercy in my success alone ; but let me find
the grasp of your hand in my failure.

12

Keep me at your door ever attending to your
wishes, and let me go about in your Kingdom
accepting your call.

Let me not sink and disappear in the depth
of languor.

Let not my life be worn out to tatters by
penury of waste.

78 SELECTIONS FROM FRUIT-GATHERING

Let not those doubts encompass me,—the
dust of distractions.

Let me not pursue many paths to gather
many things.

Let me not bend my heart to the yoke of
the many.

Let me hold my head high in the courage and
pride of being your servant.

SONGS FROM THE CYCLE OF SPRING.

The Heralds of Spring are abroad. There are songs in the rustling bamboo leaves, in birds' nests, and in blossoming branches.

I

SONG OF THE BAMBOO.

O South Wind, the Wanderer, come and rock me,
Rouse me into the rapture of new leaves.

I am the wayside bamboo tree, waiting for your
breath

To tingle life into my branches.

O South Wind, the Wanderer, my dwelling is in
the end of the lane.

I know your wayfaring, and the language of
your footsteps.

Your least touch thrills me out of my
slumber,

Your whisper gleans my secrets.

2

SONG OF THE BIRD.

THE sky pours its light into our hearts,

We fill the sky with songs in answer.

We pelt the air with our notes,

When the air stirs our wings with its madness.

O Flame of the Forest,

All your flower-torches are ablaze ;

You have kissed our songs red with the passion
of your youth.

In the spring breeze the mango blossoms launch
their messages to the unknown,

And the new leaves dream aloud all day.

O Sirish, you have cast your perfume-net
round our hearts,

Drawing them out in songs.

3

SONG OF THE BLOSSOMING CHAMPAK

My shadow dances in your waves,

Everflowing river,

I, the blossoming champak, stand unmoved on the
bank,

With my flower-vigils.

My movement dwells in the stillness of my depth,

In the delicious birth of new leaves,

In flood of flowers,

In unseen urge of new life towards the light.

Its stirring thrills the sky, and the silence of the
dawn is moved.

4

SONG OF APRIL.

The fire of April leaps from forest to forest,

Flashing up in leaves and flowers from all
nooks and corners.

The sky is thriftless with colours,

The air delicious with songs.

The wind-tost branches of the woodland

Spread their unrest in our blood.

The air is filled with bewilderment of mirth ;
And the breeze rushes from flower to flower,
asking their names.

5

SONG OF THE BAND OF YOUTHS.

We are free, my friends, from the fear of work,
For we know that work is play,—the play of
life.

It is Play, to fight and toss,
between life and death ;

It is Play that flashes in the laughter of light in
the infinite heart ;

It roars in the wind,
and surges in the sea.

Play blooms in flower
and ripens in fruit,

In the sunshine of eternal youth.

Play bursts up in the blood-red fire,
and licks into ashes the decaying
and the dead.

[*Spring's Heralds try to rob Winter of his outfit
of age.*]

6

SONG OF THE HERALDS OF SPRING.

WE seek our playmates,
Waking them up from all corners
before it is morning.
We call them in bird songs,
Beckon them in nodding branches.
We spread our spell for them
In the splendour of clouds.
We laugh at solemn Death
Till he joins in our laughter.
We tear open Time's purse,
Taking back his plunder from him.
You shall lose your heart to us, O Winter.
It will gleam in the trembling leaves
And break into flowers.

7

SONG OF WINTER.

LEAVE me, let me go.
I sail for the bleak North, for the peace of the
frozen shore.
Your laughter is untimely, my friends.
You turn my farewell tunes into the welcome song
of the Newcomer,
And all things draw me back again into the
dancing ring of their hearts.

8

SONG OF THE HERALDS OF SPRING.

LIFE'S spies are we, lurking in ambush everywhere.
We wait to rob you of your last savings of
withered hours,
to scatter them in the wayward winds.
We shall bind you in flower chains where Spring
keeps his captives,
For we know you carry your jewels of youth
hidden in your grey rags.

9

SONG OF THE BAND OF YOUTHS.

We move and move without rest.

We move while the wanderer's stars shine in the
sky and fade.

We play the tune of the road,

While our limbs scatter away the laughter of
movement,

And our many coloured mantle of youth
flutters about in the air.

We move and move without rest.

World, the Rover, loves his comrades of the
road.

His call comes across the sky,

The seasons lead the way, strewing the path
with flowers.

[*Winter is being unmasked—his hidden youth
about to be disclosed*]

10

SONG OF THE HERALDS OF SPRING.

How grave he looks,
how laughably old,
How solemnly quiet among death preparations !
Come, friends, help him to find himself before he
reaches home.

Change his pilgrim's robe
into the dress of the singing youth.

Snatch away his bag of dead things
And confound his calculations.

The time comes when the world shall know
that you are not banished in your own shadows ;
Your heart shall burst in torrents

Out of the clasp of the ice ;

And your North wind turn its face
Against the haunts of the flitting phantoms.

There sounds the magician's drum,
And the sun waits with laughter in his glance,
To see your grey turn into green.

II

SONG OF THE MINSTREL.

GENTLY, my friend, gently lead me to your silent
chamber.

I know not the way, I have not the light,

Dark is my life and my world.

I have only the sound of your steps to guide me in
this wilderness.

Gently, my friend, gently lead me along the dark
shore.

Let the hint of the way come in whisper,
Through the night, in the April breeze.

I have only the scent of your garland to guide
me in this wilderness.

12

THE SONG OF RETURNING YOUTH.

AGAIN and again we say "Good-bye,"

To come back again and again.

Oh, who are you ?

I am the flower *vakul*.

And who are you ?

I am the flower *parul*.

And who are these ?

We are mango blossoms landed on the shore of
light.

We laugh and take leave when the time beckons
us.

We rush into the arms of the ever-returning.

But who are you ?

I am the flower *shimul*.

And who are you ?

I am the *kamini* bunch.

And who are these ?

We are the jostling crowd of new leaves.

13

THE SONG OF BURDENS DROPPED

Do you own defeat at the hand of youth ?

Yes.

Have you met at last the ageless Old, who ever
grows new ?

Yes

Have you come out of the walls that crumble and
bury those whom they shelter ?

Yes.

Do you own defeat at the hands of life ?

Yes.

Have you passed through death to stand at last
face to face with the Deathless ?

Yes.

Have you dealt the blow to the demon dust, that
swallows your city Immortal ?

Yes.

14

THE SONG OF FRESH BEAUTY.

WE waited by the wayside counting moments,
till you appeared in the April morning.

You come as a soldier-boy winning life at death's
gate,—

Oh, the wonder of it.

We listen amazed at the music of your young
voice.

Your mantle is blown in the wind like the
fragrance of the Spring.

The white spray of *malati* flowers in your hair
shines like star-clusters.

A fire burns through the veil of your smile,—
Oh, the wonder of it.

And who knows where your arrows are hidden,
which smite death?

15

SONG OF THE YOUTHS.

I SHALL crown you with my garland, before I take
leave.

You ever spoke to me in all my joys and
sorrows.

And now, at the end of the day, my own heart
will break in speech.

Words came to me, but not the time,

And the song, that I never sang to you,
remains hidden behind my tears.

16

SONGS OF THE MINSTREL.

(i)

LET me give my all to him, before I am asked,
whom the world offers its all.
When I came to him for my gifts, I was not
doubtful ;
And I will not fear, when I come to him,
to give up what I have.
The morning accepts his gold with songs, the
evening pays him back the debt of gold and
is glad.
The joy of the blooming flower comes to fruit,
with shedding of its leaves.
Hasten, my heart, and spend yourself in love,
before the day is done.

(ii)

The Spring flowers have woven my wreath of
victory,
The South wind breathes its breath of fire in
my blood.

The voice of the house-corner waits in vain from
behind.

Death stands before me, offering its crown.
The tempest of youth sweeps the sky-harp with
its fingers ;

My heart dances in its wild rhythm.
Gathering and storing are not for me,
I spend and scatter.
And prudence and comfort bid me adieu in
despair.

(iii)

Victory to thee, victory for ever,
O brave heart.

Victory to life, to joy, to love,
To eternal light.

The night shall wane, the darkness shall vanish,
Have faith, brave heart.

Wake up from sleep, from languor of despair,
Receive the light of new dawn with a song.

17

THE SONG OF THE FESTIVAL OF SPRING.

COME and rejoice,
for April is awake,
Fling yourselves into the flood of being,
bursting the bondage of the past.

April is awake,
Life's shoreless sea
is heaving in the sun before you.
All the losses are lost,
and death is drowned in its waves.
Plunge into the deep without fear,
with the gladness of April in your heart.

SELECTIONS FROM STRAY BIRDS.

1

"WHAT language is thine, O sea?"

"The language of eternal question."

"What language is thy answer, O sky?"

"The language of eternal silence."

2

THEY throw their shadows before them who
carry their lanterns on their backs.

3

REST belongs to the work as the eyelids
to the eyes.

4

THE waterfall sings, "I find my song, when I
find my freedom."

5

WHILE the glass lamp rebukes the earthen for calling it cousin, the moon rises, and the glass lamp, with a bland smile, calls her,—“ My dear, dear sister,”

6

LIFE is given to us, we earn it by giving it.

7

THE infant flower opens its bud and cries,
“ Dear World, please do not fade.”

8

GOD grows weary of great kingdoms, but never of little flowers.

9

WRONG cannot afford defeat, but Right can.

10

EVERY child comes with the message that
God is not yet discouraged of man.

II

HE who wants to do good knocks at the gate ;
he who loves finds the gate open.

12

" How far are you from me, O Fruit ?"
" I am hidden in your heart, O Flower."

13

" YOU are the big drop of dew under the lotus leaf, I am the smaller one on its upper side," said the dewdrop to the lake.

14

THE birth and death of the leaves are the rapid whirls of the eddy whose wider circles move slowly among stars.

15

POWER said to the world, " You are mine "
The world kept it prisoner on her throne.
Love said to the world, " I am thine."
The world gave it the freedom of her house,

16

THE mist is like the earth's desire.
It hides the sun for whom she cries.

17

THE cloud stood humbly in a corner of the sky.
The morning crowned it with splendour.

18

GOD is ashamed when the prosperous boasts of
his special favour.

19

THE hills are like shouts of children who raise
their arms, trying to catch stars.

20

THE leaf becomes flower when it loves.
The flower becomes fruit when it worships.

21

THE roots below the earth claim no rewards
for making the branches fruitful.

22

"WHO is there to take up my duties?" asked the setting sun.

"I shall do what I can, my Master," said the earthen lamp.

23

THE Great walks with the Small without fear.
The Middling keeps aloof.

24

THE raindrops kissed the earth and whispered,—
"We are thy homesick children, mother, come back to thee from the heaven."

25

"THE learned say that your lights will one day be no more," said the fire-fly to the stars.

The stars made no answer.

26

THE sunflower blushed to own the nameless flower as her kin.

The sun rose and smiled on it, saying, "Are you well, my darling?"

27

HE who is too busy doing good finds no time to be good.

28

THEY hated and killed and men praised them.

But God in shame hastens to hide its memory under the green grass.

29

GOD waits to win back his own flowers as gifts from man's hands.

30

THE service of the fruit is precious, the service of the flower is sweet, but let my service be the service of the leaves in its shade of humble devotion.

31

THOSE who have everything but thee, my God,
laugh at those who have nothing but thyself.

32

I HAVE learnt the simple meaning of thy
whispers in flowers and sunshine,—teach me to
know thy words in pain and death.

33

WHEN I stand before thee at the day's end,
thou shalt see my scars and know that I had my
wounds and also my healing.

SELECTIONS FROM LOVER'S GIFT.

I

WHERE is heaven ? you ask me, my child.—The sages tell us it is beyond the limits of birth and death, unswayed by the rhythm of day and night ; it is not of this earth.

But your poet knows that its eternal hunger is for time and space, and it strives evermore to be born in the fruitful dust. Heaven is fulfilled in your sweet body, my child, in your palpitating heart.

The sea is beating its drums in joy, the flowers are a-tiptoe to kiss you. For heaven is born in you, in the arms of the mother-dust.

2

THE early autumn day is cloudless. The river is full to the brim, washing the naked roots of

the tottering tree by the ford. The long narrow path, like the thirsty tongue of the village, dips down into the stream.

My heart is full, as I look around me and see the silent sky and the flowing water, and feel that happiness is spread abroad, as simply as a smile on a child's face.

3

THE evening was lonely for me, and I was reading a book till my heart became dry, and it seemed to me that beauty was a thing fashioned by the traders in words. Tired I shut the book and snuffed the candle. In a moment the room was flooded with moonlight.

Spirit of Beauty, how could you, whose radiance overbrims the sky, stand hidden behind a candle's tiny flame? How could a few vain words from a book rise like a mist, and veil her whose voice has hushed the heart of earth into ineffable calm?

SELECTIONS FROM CROSSING.

I

FREE me as free are the birds of the wilds,
the wanderers of unseen paths.

Free me as free are the deluge of rain, and
the storm that shakes its locks and rushes on
to its unknown end.

Free me as free is the forest fire, as is the
thunder that laughs aloud and hurls defiance to
darkness.

2

REJOICE !

For Night's fetters are broken, the dreams
have vanished.

Thy word has rent its veils, the buds of morn-
ing are opened ; awake, O sleeper !

Light's greetings spread from the East to the West.

And at the ramparts of the ruined prison rise the pæans of Victory !

3

I HAVE come to thee to take thy touch, before I begin my day.

Let thy eyes rest upon my eyes for awhile.

Let me take to my work the assurance of thy comradeship, my friend.

Fill my mind with thy music to last through the desert of noise !

Let thy love's sunshine kiss the peaks of my thoughts and linger in my life's valley where the harvest ripens.

4

STAND before my eyes, and let thy glance touch my songs into a flame.

Stand among thy stars and let me find kindled in their lights my own fire of worship.

The earth is waiting at the world's wayside ;

Stand upon the green mantle she has flung
upon thy path ; and let me feel in her grass and
meadow flowers the spread of my own salutation.

Stand in my lonely evening where my heart
watches alone ; fill her cup of solitude, and let
me feel in me the infinity of thy love.

5

LET thy love play upon my voice and rest
on my silence.

Let it pass through my heart into all my
movements.

Let thy love like stars shine in the darkness
of my sleep and dawn in my awakening.

Let it burn in the flame of my desires, and
flow in all currents of my own love.

Let me carry thy love in my life as a harp
does its music, and give it back to thee at last
with my life.

6

I REMEMBER my childhood when the sunrise, like my play-fellow, would burst in to my bedside with its daily surprise of morning ;

When the faith in the marvellous bloomed like fresh flowers in my heart every day, looking into the face of the world in simple gladness ;

When insects, birds and beasts, the common weeds, grass and the clouds had their fullest value of wonder ;

When the patter of rain at night brought dreams from the fairyland, and mother's voice in the evening gave meaning to the stars.

And then I think of death, and the rise of the curtain and the new morning and my life awakened in its fresh surprise of love.

7

THOU hast given me thy seat at thy window from the early hour.

I have spoken to thy silent servants of the road running on thy errands, and have sung with thy choir of the sky.

I have seen the sea in calm bearing its immeasurable silence, and in storm struggling to break open its own mystery of depth.

I have watched the earth in its prodigal feast of youth, and in its slow hours of brooding shadows.

Those who went to sow seeds have heard my greetings, and those who brought their harvest home or their empty baskets have passed by my songs.

Thus at last my day has ended, and now in the evening I sing my last song to say that I have loved thy world.

SELECTIONS FROM "THE FUGITIVE."

I

You, like a rivulet swift and sinuous, laugh
and dance, and your steps sing as you trip along.

I, like a bank rugged and steep, stand speech-
less and stock-still and darkly gaze at you.

I, like a big, foolish storm, of a sudden come
rushing on and try to rend my being and scatter
it parcelled in a whirl of passion.

You, like the lightning's flash slender and
keen, pierce the heart of the turbulent darkness,
to disappear in a vivid streak of laughter.

2

I was walking along a path overgrown with
grass, when suddenly I heard from some one
behind, "See if you know me?"

I turned round and looked at her and said, "I cannot remember your name."

She said, "I am that first great Sorrow whom you met when you were young."

Her eyes looked like a morning whose dew is still in the air.

I stood silent for some time till I said, "Have you lost all the great burden of your tears?"

She smiled and said nothing. I felt that her tears had had time to learn the language of smiles.

"Once you said," she whispered, "that you would cherish your grief for ever."

I blushed and said, "Yes, but years have passed and I forget."

Then I took her hand in mine and said, "But you have changed."

"What was sorrow once has now become peace," she said.

3

Come, Spring, reckless lover of the earth, make the forest's heart pant for utterance !

Come in gusts of disquiet where flowers break open and jostle the new leaves !

Burst, like a rebellion of light, through the night's vigil, through the lake's dark dumbness, through the dungeon under the dust, proclaiming freedom to the shackled seeds !

Like the laughter of lightning, like the shout of a storm, break into the midst of the noisy town ; free stifled word and unconscious effort, reinforce our flagging fight, and conquer death !

4

I have looked on this picture in many a month of March when the mustard is in bloom,—this lazy line of the water and the grey of the sand beyond, the rough path along the river-bank carrying the comradeship of the field into the heart of the village.

I have tried to capture in rhyme the idle whistle of the wind, the beat of the oar-strokes from a passing boat.

I have wondered in my mind how simply it stands before me, this great world : with what fond and familiar ease it fills my heart, this encounter with the *Eternal Stranger*.

5

In the evening my little daughter heard a call from her companions below the window.

She timidly went down the dark stairs holding a lamp in her hand, shielding it behind her veil.

I was sitting on my terrace in the star-lit night of March, when at a sudden cry I ran to see.

Her lamp had gone out in the dark spiral staircase. I asked, "Child, why did you cry?"

From below she answered in distress, "Father, I have lost myself!"

When I came back to the terrace under the star-lit night of March, I looked at the sky, and it seemed that a child was walking there treasuring many lamps behind her veils.

If their light went out, she would suddenly stop and a cry would sound from sky to sky, "Father, I have lost myself!"

6

The day came for the image from the temple to be drawn round the holy town in its chariot.

The Queen said to the King, "Let us go and attend the festival."

Only one man out of the whole household did not join in the pilgrimage. His work was to collect stalks of spear-grass to make brooms for the King's house.

The chief of the servants said in pity to him, "You may come with us."

He bowed his head, saying, "It cannot be."

The man dwelt by the road along which the King's followers had to pass. And when the Minister's elephant reached this spot, he called to him and said, "Come with us and see the God ride in his chariot!"

"I dare not seek God after the King's fashion," said the man.

"How should you ever have such luck again as to see the God in his chariot?" asked the Minister.

"When God himself comes to my door," answered the man.

The Minister laughed loud and said, "Fool! 'When God comes to your door!' yet a King must travel to see him!"

"Who except God visits the poor?" said the man.

7

Days were drawing out as the winter ended, and, in the sun, my dog played in his wild way with the pet deer.

The crowd going to the market gathered by the fence, and laughed to see the love of these playmates struggle with languages so dissimilar.

The spring was in the air, and the young leaves fluttered like flames. A gleam danced in the deer's dark eyes when she started, bent her neck at the movement of her own shadow, or raised her ears to listen to some whisper in the wind.

The message comes floating with the errant breeze, with the rustle and glimmer abroad in the April sky. It sings of the first ache of youth in the world, when the first flower broke from the bud, and love went forth seeking that which it knew not, leaving all it had known.

And one afternoon, when among the *amlak* trees the shadow grew grave and sweet with the

furtive caress of light, the deer set off to run like a meteor in love with death.

It grow dark, and lamps were lighted in the house ; the stars came out and night was upon the fields, but the deer never came back.

My dog ran up to me whining, questioning me with his piteous eyes which seemed to say, "I do not understand !"

But who does ever understand ?

8

When like a flaming scimitar the hill stream has been sheathed in gloom by the evening, suddenly a flock of birds passes overhead, their loud-laughing wings hurling their flight like an arrow among stars.

It startles a passion for speed in the heart of all motionless things ; the hills seem to feel in their bosom the anguish of storm-clouds, and trees long to break their rooted shackles.

For me the flight of these birds has rent a veil of stillness, and reveals an immense flutter in this deep silence.

I see these hills and forests fly across time to the unknown, and darkness thrill into fire as the stars wing by.

I feel in my own being the rush of the sea-crossing bird, cleaving a way beyond the limits of life and death, while the migrant world cries with a myriad voices, "Not here, but somewhere else, in the bosom of the Far-away."

9

The crowd listens in wonder to Kashi, the young singer, whose voice, like a sword in feats of skill, dances amidst hopeless tangles, cuts them to pieces, and exults.

Among the hearers sits old Rajah Pratap in weary endurance. For his own life had been nourished and encircled by Barajlal's songs, like a happy land which a river laces with beauty. His rainy evenings and the still hours of autumn days spoke to his heart through Barajlal's voice, and his festive nights trimmed their lamps and tinkled their bells to those songs.

When Kashi stopped for rest, Pratap smilingly winked at Barajlal and spoke to him in a whisper,

"Master, now let us hear music and not this new-fangled singing, which mimics frisky kittens hunting paralysed mice."

The old singer with his spotlessly white turban made a deep bow to the assembly and took his seat. His thin fingers struck the strings of his instrument, his eyes closed, and in timid hesitation his song began. The hall was large, his voice feeble, and Pratap shouted "Bravo !" with ostentation, but whispered in his ear, "Just a little louder, friend !"

The crowd was restless ; some yawned, some dozed, some complained of the heat. The air of the hall hummed with many-toned inattention, and the song, like a frail boat, tossed upon it in vain till it sank under the hubbub.

Suddenly the old man, stricken at heart, forgot a passage, and his voice groped in agony, like a blind man at a fair for his lost leader. He tried to fill the gap with any strain that came. But the gap still yawned : and the tortured notes refused to serve the need, suddenly changed their tune, and broke into a sob. The master laid his head on his instrument, and in place of his for-

gotten music, there broke from him the first cry of life that a child brings into the world.

Pratap touched him gently on his shoulder, and said, "Come away, our meeting is elsewhere. I know, my friend, that truth is widowed without love, and beauty dwells not with the many, nor in the moment."

10

Give me the supreme courage of love, this is my prayer,—the courage to speak, to do, to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone. Strengthen me on errands of danger, honour me with pain, and help me climb to that difficult mood which sacrifices daily to thee.

Give me the supreme confidence of love, this is my prayer—the confidence that belongs to life in death, to victory in defeat, to the power hidden in frailest beauty, to that dignity in pain which accepts hurt but disdains to return it.

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